

Dear Experience Princeton Stakeholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of Experience Princeton, we are pleased to share our FY 2026-2027 Report to Our Stakeholders: Building on Strength.

Princeton's business districts remain among the region's most vibrant and distinctive places to live, work, shop, dine, and visit. That success is the result of the continued investment, creativity, and commitment of the businesses, property owners, nonprofit organizations, and community partners who make Princeton such a special place.

As Princeton's Special Improvement District, Experience Princeton exists to support and strengthen our commercial districts through strategic investments in marketing, economic development, placemaking, beautification, advocacy, and business engagement. The enclosed report outlines the initiatives and priorities that will guide our work during the coming fiscal year and demonstrates how member assessments are being invested to advance the economic vitality and long-term success of our community.

This year, we will focus on initiatives designed to elevate Princeton's visibility as a destination, enhance the quality and character of our public spaces, support local businesses, encourage investment, strengthen district identity, and build the data, partnerships, and resources necessary for future growth. At the same time, we remain committed to serving as a trusted advocate and collaborative partner for our members and the broader community.

While the projects described in this report are important, the true strength of Experience Princeton lies in the engagement of its stakeholders. Your participation, ideas, feedback, and support help shape our priorities and ensure that our programs remain responsive to the needs of Princeton's business community.

As we look ahead, we invite you to become more actively involved in our work. Whether by serving on one of Experience Princeton's committees, volunteering at community events and promotional programs, participating in networking opportunities, or sharing your expertise and perspectives, there are many ways to contribute. Your involvement not only strengthens our organization but also helps ensure that our initiatives reflect the diverse needs and priorities of Princeton's business districts.

In the coming months, we will be expanding opportunities for members to engage in planning, placemaking, marketing, economic development, and community-building initiatives. We encourage you to consider how you can play a role in helping shape the future of Princeton's commercial districts.

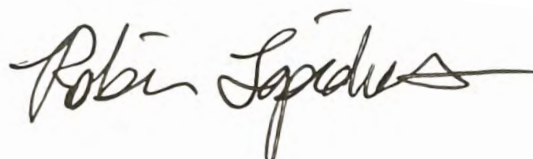
We also encourage you to review the report, participate in upcoming programs and events, provide feedback, and continue supporting your fellow local businesses. Together, we can build on Princeton's many strengths and ensure that our commercial districts remain vibrant, welcoming, and economically resilient for years to come.

Thank you for your continued partnership, engagement, and investment in Experience Princeton.

In partnership,



Michael Monarca
Board President
Experience Princeton



Robin Lapidus
Executive Director
Experience Princeton

REPORT TO OUR STAKEHOLDERS

Experience Princeton FY 2026–27: Building on Strength

About Experience Princeton

Experience Princeton is Princeton's Special Improvement District (SID), a public-private partnership created to strengthen the community's commercial districts and support the businesses, property owners, residents, and visitors who contribute to Princeton's vitality. Through programs focused on marketing, economic development, placemaking, beautification, business support, and advocacy, Experience Princeton works to enhance the economic health and overall experience of Princeton's business districts while helping ensure they remain vibrant, welcoming, and competitive.

Introduction

During the 2026–2027 fiscal year, Experience Princeton will invest approximately \$282,500 in direct programmatic initiatives. In addition, approximately \$301,750 will support the professional staff, organizational infrastructure, communications, and operational capacity required to implement these programs and services, resulting in a total FY 2026–2027 budget of \$584,250. Together, these investments reflect a coordinated strategy that combines marketing, economic development, placemaking, advocacy, and business engagement to support Princeton's continued success.

Building Princeton's Identity and Promoting the Community Investment: \$147,500

Experience Princeton's largest programmatic investment this year is focused on strengthening Princeton's identity as a vibrant destination to live, work, shop, dine, and visit. Through a coordinated combination of branding, marketing, tourism promotion, business engagement, and digital communications, the organization will work to increase visitation, support local businesses, and build a shared sense of place across Princeton's commercial districts.

These initiatives recognize that today's downtowns compete not only with neighboring communities but also with online retailers and regional shopping destinations. Creating a strong identity and consistently telling Princeton's story is essential to supporting local businesses and sustaining the vitality of the community.

■ District Branding and Identity Development

One of the most significant projects planned for the coming year is the development of comprehensive branding and identity materials for Princeton's commercial districts. While Princeton is widely recognized as a destination, many visitors are less familiar with the unique character and offerings of areas such as Witherspoon-Jackson, Juggtown, 206 North, and other business districts within the community.

Experience Princeton will work to define and communicate the distinctive stories, assets, and experiences associated with each district. This effort will include the creation of district narratives, visual identity elements, maps, and promotional materials that help residents and visitors better understand the range of experiences available throughout Princeton.



The intended result will be a stronger sense of place, visitors exploring beyond their usual destinations, and investment across Princeton's business districts.

■ Website Modernization and Digital Communications

Experience Princeton will undertake a comprehensive refresh of its digital presence to improve communication with residents, visitors, businesses, and community partners.

A redesigned website will serve as a central platform for business listings, event promotion, dining and shopping information, parking and transportation resources, and community updates. Enhanced digital tools will make it easier for visitors to discover businesses, navigate the community, and learn about upcoming programs and events. At the same time, Experience Princeton will continue to expand its social media presence, email communications, and digital advertising efforts to ensure that local businesses benefit from consistent visibility throughout the year.

■ Destination Marketing and Visitor Attraction

Experience Princeton will implement targeted marketing campaigns designed to encourage residents and visitors to support local businesses.

Promotional initiatives will highlight Princeton's unique mix of restaurants, independent retailers, cultural institutions, public spaces, and community events. Campaigns will be designed to increase foot traffic during both peak and shoulder seasons, helping businesses attract customers year-round.

Marketing efforts will also leverage Princeton's regional and national reputation by promoting the community as a premier destination for dining, shopping, cultural tourism, and day trips.

■ Restaurant and Retail Promotion Programs

Recognizing that restaurants and retailers are essential contributors to Princeton's economy and community character, Experience Princeton will continue to invest in programs that directly support local businesses.

Restaurant Week and related dining promotions will showcase Princeton's culinary offerings while encouraging residents and visitors to explore new establishments.

Retail campaigns, seasonal promotions, and expanded gift card initiatives will help drive customer traffic to local businesses and reinforce the value of shopping locally.

These programs provide businesses with marketing support that many small businesses would have difficulty providing independently while generating community-wide economic benefits.

■ Heritage Tourism and America's 250th Anniversary

Princeton is uniquely positioned to benefit from increased interest in Revolutionary-era history during and after the America250 celebrations.

Experience Princeton will continue to collaborate with community partners to develop and promote heritage tourism initiatives that highlight Princeton's significant historical assets and role in the nation's founding.



These efforts will help attract visitors, support local businesses, and strengthen awareness of Princeton's rich cultural and historical resources.

■ Community Events and Business Engagement

Experience Princeton will continue to serve as a convener and connector for Princeton's business community through networking events, ribbon cuttings, and promotional programs.

These activities help build relationships among business owners, property owners, community organizations, and public-sector partners while creating opportunities to celebrate new investments and business successes.

By fostering stronger connections within the business community, Experience Princeton helps create the collaborative environment necessary for long-term economic vitality.

■ Leveraging Regional and International Opportunities

We will continue work associated with major regional initiatives and external funding opportunities, including tourism and promotional activities similar to the recent, successful FIFA-related grants.

These efforts are designed to leverage external resources, increase Princeton's visibility, and ensure that the community benefits from regional visitor activity and tourism growth.

Creating Vibrant Streetscapes and Memorable Public Spaces

Investment: \$80,000

A successful downtown is shaped not only by its businesses, but also by the quality of its public spaces. Experience Princeton's streetscape and placemaking initiatives are designed to create attractive, welcoming, and memorable environments that encourage people to spend more time in Princeton's commercial districts.

Research consistently shows that visitors are more likely to shop, dine, and return to communities that are visually appealing, easy to navigate, and offer a strong sense of place. Over the coming year, Experience Princeton will continue investing in improvements that enhance the appearance and functionality of Princeton's business districts while supporting broader community development goals.

These investments are intended to benefit every business district by improving the overall visitor experience and strengthening Princeton's position as one of New Jersey's premier downtown destinations.

■ Storefront Sign Improvement Grant Program

One of the organization's most visible initiatives this year will be the launch of a storefront sign improvement matching grant program.

Due to anticipated updates to the Municipality of Princeton's sign ordinance, many businesses have expressed interest in upgrading or replacing storefront signage.

Through this new grant program, Experience Princeton will provide financial assistance to help businesses make improvements that enhance visibility, strengthen brand identity, and contribute to a more attractive streetscape.



Well-designed signage plays an important role in helping customers discover businesses, improving pedestrian engagement, and creating a cohesive visual environment. Over time, these investments will help strengthen the overall appearance of Princeton's commercial districts while supporting individual business success.

■ **Seasonal Landscaping and Beautification**

Experience Princeton will continue investing in seasonal plantings, planters, landscaping enhancements, and beautification projects throughout Princeton's commercial districts.

These improvements provide an immediate visual impact while reinforcing Princeton's reputation as a welcoming and vibrant community. Attractive streetscapes encourage visitors to linger, explore additional businesses, and spend more time downtown.

The expanded landscaping program will focus on key pedestrian corridors, gateways, and highly visible locations that contribute to first impressions for residents and visitors alike.

■ **Wayfinding and District Identification**

As Princeton continues to grow as a regional destination and as the population of the community grows, helping both residents and visitors navigate the community is increasingly important.

Experience Princeton will continue to develop new wayfinding tools, district maps, and identity markers that make it easier for visitors to locate shopping districts, restaurants, cultural destinations, public parking facilities, and community amenities.

These improvements will not only improve the visitor and resident experience but will also help distribute activity throughout Princeton's business districts by encouraging exploration beyond the most familiar destinations.

Improved wayfinding supports local businesses by helping customers discover new areas, increasing exposure for merchants and attractions that may be less visible to first-time visitors.

■ **Seasonal Decorations and Community Character**

One of the most visible ways Experience Princeton contributes to the community's character and atmosphere is through seasonal decorations.

During the coming year, the organization will expand efforts to provide seasonal displays and holiday decorations throughout additional commercial districts. These enhancements help create a festive and welcoming environment that encourages visitation during key shopping and dining periods.

Seasonal décor also contributes to neighborhood pride and reinforces Princeton's identity as a destination that values both its public spaces and its local businesses.

■ **Public Art and Creative Placemaking**

Building upon successful projects such as the Dohm Alley mural initiative, Experience Princeton will continue exploring opportunities to incorporate public art and creative placemaking into commercial districts.



Public art helps transform ordinary spaces into destinations, creating opportunities for community engagement, social interaction, and cultural expression. These projects also enhance the identity of business districts by creating memorable experiences for visitors and distinctive places that promote exploration and repeat visitation.

Future placemaking initiatives may include murals, temporary installations, interactive public spaces, or other creative enhancements that contribute to Princeton's unique character.

Strengthening Economic Vitality & Supporting Business Growth

Investment: \$55,000

A thriving downtown requires more than marketing and beautification. It also requires a strategic approach to economic development that supports existing businesses, attracts new investment, and positions the community for long-term success.

During FY 2026-2027, Experience Princeton will undertake several initiatives aimed at better understanding Princeton's commercial marketplace, supporting entrepreneurship, informing future investments, and creating the data and partnerships needed to strengthen the local economy.

These projects will help ensure that Princeton remains competitive in a rapidly changing retail, office, and restaurant environment.

■ Commercial Property and Business District Database

One of the most important projects planned for the coming year is the development of a comprehensive commercial property and business district database.

This resource will compile information regarding commercial properties, vacancies, ownership patterns, leasing opportunities, business locations, and other key economic indicators.

Creating a centralized inventory of this information will allow Experience Princeton to better understand market conditions, identify emerging challenges, track district performance, and proactively support business recruitment efforts.

The database will become a valuable long-term asset that can inform planning decisions, economic development strategies, and investment priorities for years to come.

■ Business Attraction and Recruitment

Maintaining a healthy mix of retail, restaurant, service, and office uses is essential to the vitality of Princeton's commercial districts.

Experience Princeton will continue working with property owners, brokers, entrepreneurs, and community partners to attract businesses that complement Princeton's existing strengths and respond to changing market conditions.

Our efforts will focus on understanding gaps in the marketplace, promoting available commercial spaces, and encouraging investment in areas where opportunities exist.



A strategic approach to recruitment can reduce vacancies, expand consumer choice, strengthen the local tax base, and enhance the overall appeal of Princeton as a commercial destination.

■ **Business Retention and Existing Business Support**

While attracting new businesses is important, retaining and supporting existing businesses remains equally critical.

Experience Princeton will continue serving as a resource for business owners by sharing information, facilitating connections, identifying support opportunities, and helping address challenges that affect business operations.

Regular engagement with merchants and property owners allows the organization to better understand evolving needs and advocate for improvements that support the business community. Strong business retention efforts help preserve the diversity and character that distinguish Princeton from other commercial centers.

■ **District Assessments and Market Analysis**

Effective economic development requires data-driven decision making.

Throughout the year, Experience Princeton will conduct focused assessments and analyses related to parking, transportation, vacancies, pedestrian activity, branding opportunities, and market conditions.

These studies will provide valuable information that can guide future capital investments, policy discussions, and strategic planning efforts. By identifying trends early and basing decisions on reliable information, Princeton can make more informed investments that generate long-term economic benefits.

■ **Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development**

Small and independent businesses are central to Princeton's identity and economic success.

Experience Princeton plans to collaborate with partners such as Main Street America and regional economic development organizations to support entrepreneurship, innovation, and small business growth.

These efforts may include educational programs, networking opportunities, technical assistance initiatives, and programs that help entrepreneurs navigate the challenges of starting or expanding a business.

Encouraging entrepreneurship helps keep Princeton's commercial districts dynamic, distinctive, and resilient.

■ **Transportation, Parking, and Accessibility Initiatives**

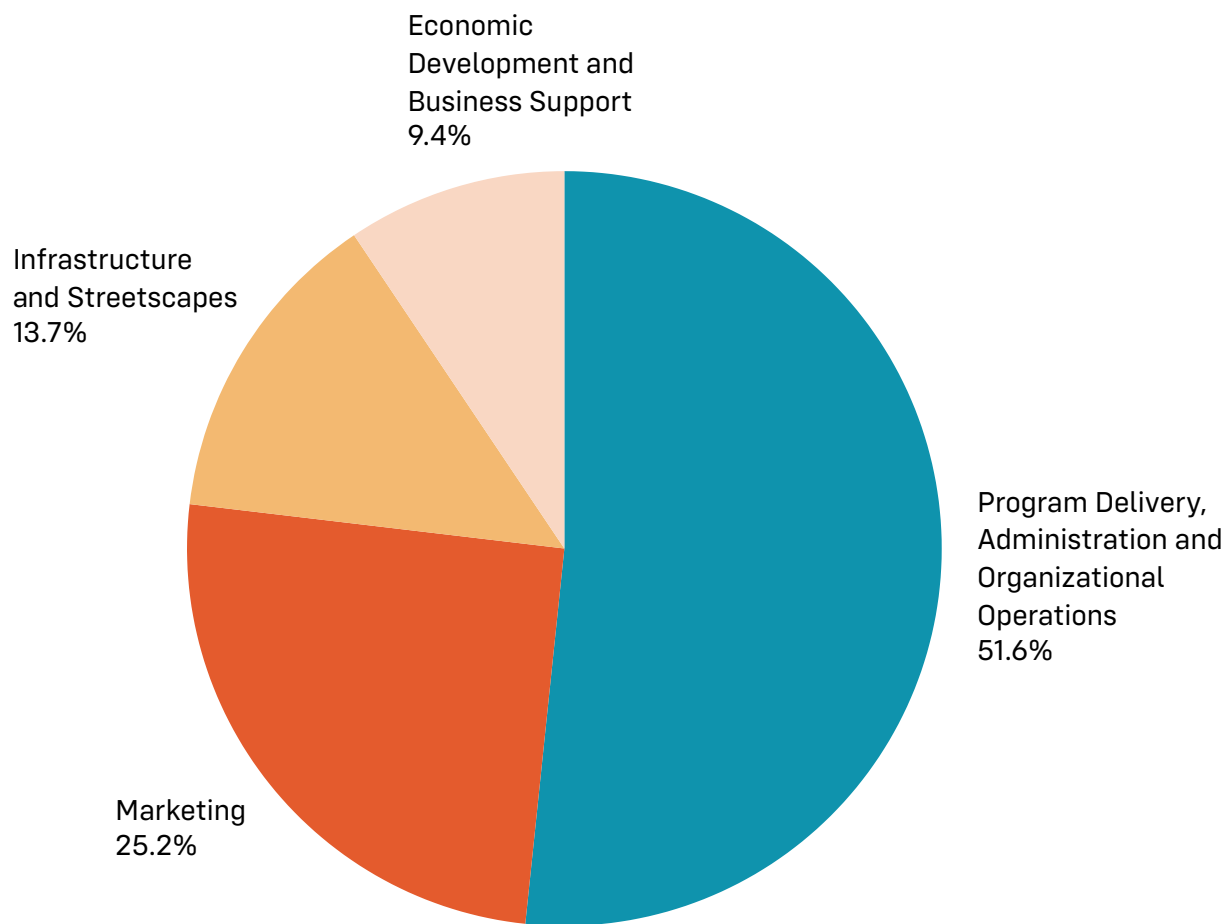
Access remains one of the most important factors influencing the success of commercial districts.

Experience Princeton will continue working with municipal and regional partners to improve awareness of available parking options, transit services, bicycle facilities, pedestrian connections, and transportation alternatives.

We will also advocate for practical mobility solutions that make it easier for residents, employees, students, and visitors to reach local businesses. Improving access not only supports economic activity but also contributes to broader community goals related to sustainability and quality of life.



Experience Princeton FY 2026–2027 Total Budget Allocation
Total Budget: \$584,250



Category	Amount	% of Total
Program Delivery, Administration and Organizational Operations	\$301,750	51.6%
Marketing	\$147,500	25.2%
Infrastructure and Streetscapes	\$80,000	13.7%
Economic Development and Business Support	\$55,000	9.4%
Total	\$584,250	100%

NOTE: Program Delivery, Administration & Organizational Operations includes the professional staff, accounting and audit services, office operations, insurance, technology, governance support, member communications, and organizational infrastructure required to plan, deliver, and evaluate all Experience Princeton programs, services, advocacy efforts, events, marketing initiatives, placemaking projects, and economic development activities. These investments provide the organizational capacity necessary to implement the initiatives outlined in this report, support ongoing member engagement, coordinate partnerships, manage day-to-day operations, and ensure that Experience Princeton can effectively serve its members and the broader community throughout the year.

Why These Investments Matter

Taken together, these investments represent a comprehensive strategy to strengthen Princeton's economy, enhance the visitor and resident experience, and position the community for long-term success.

By investing in marketing, placemaking, economic development, business support, and organizational capacity, Experience Princeton is helping to:

- Increase customer traffic and visibility for local businesses.
- Attract new visitors and encourage longer stays.
- Promote spending at Princeton restaurants, retailers, and service providers.
- Support the retention and recruitment of businesses.
- Reduce vacancies and encourage private investment.
- Enhance streetscapes, public spaces, and community character.
- Improve navigation, accessibility, and connectivity throughout Princeton's commercial districts.
- Strengthen Princeton's reputation as a premier destination to live, work, shop, dine, and visit.
- Foster entrepreneurship, innovation, and long-term economic resilience.
- Create tools, partnerships, and resources that will continue generating value beyond this fiscal year.

Looking Ahead

The success of Princeton's business districts depends on the collective participation of businesses, property owners, residents, visitors, community organizations, and public-sector partners. The investments outlined in this report are designed to create lasting benefits, but their impact grows when the broader community is engaged.

We encourage our stakeholders to stay connected, participate in Experience Princeton programs and events, share feedback, support local businesses, and help us tell Princeton's story. Your involvement helps strengthen our commercial districts, shape future initiatives, and ensure that Princeton remains a vibrant and thriving destination for years to come.

Thank you for your continued partnership, engagement, and investment in Experience Princeton and the future of Princeton's business community.

Contact us for question or more information:

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